



How is digital technology being used by the third sector in Scotland to support people with learning disabilities and their families?



Working together

Respect
Everyone's voice matters

Lived
experience

Human solutions for human problems

Collective working

Equality

Human rights

Dignity

together

Idea generation

Empowering
people

People centred

Acting with

Values based

Kindness

Compassionate working

integrity

Hope

Putting people first

Accessibility

Dreaming better

Social Innovation

Taking action

Helpfulness

Social model

Caring for carers

Fairness

Doing what is right

When you design with disability in mind everyone benefits

About this report

As part of its [Digital Transformation Project](#), the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD) was keen to understand how digital technology was being used by the third sector in Scotland to support people with learning disabilities and their families. SCLD approached Emma Pauley Co-production to undertake this work.

Introduction

SCLD received funding from the Scottish Government's [Technology Enabled Care \(TEC\) Programme](#), to consider how digital technology could transform the lives of people with learning disabilities. SCLD used this funding to co-design a project with people with learning disabilities, their carers, and supporters. The project aimed to:

- meaningfully engage people with learning disabilities as co-creators of transformation;
- identify where and for whom the need for transformation is greatest;
- identify themes for transformation;
- engage beyond the learning disability and health and social care sectors to find examples of transformational technology, and;
- test new applications for technology.

Aim

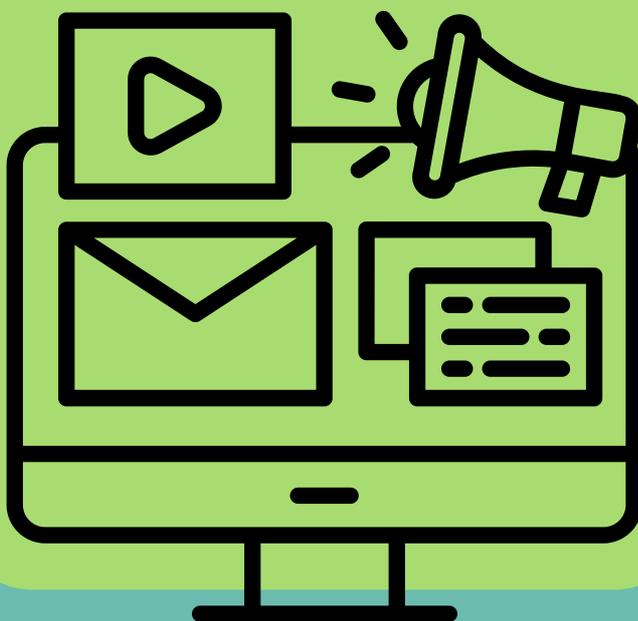
The aim of this report was to understand how digital technology was being used by the third sector in Scotland to support people with learning disabilities and their families. The key deliverable being a short, non-exhaustive, report detailing current availability, as well as barriers and opportunities to support people to interact and engage digitally across Scotland.

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Kindred



Highlights



Online workshops can reach more people.



Online workshops can make it easier for families to access support.



Online training is cost effective and efficient.



It can be more difficult to support families with grants/ funding applications and benefits online.



Kindred utilise social media to help keep people informed and establish and maintain a sense of community.



There is a lot out of information out there and it's quite overwhelming.



Online makes it easier to find and connect with services.



Some adult day services are making good use of digital technology to create films and animations etc.



Learning disability nurses are useful to help aid understanding around specific issues.



COVID meant that we moved more of our service online.

Sophie Pilgrim, CEO of Kindred

About Kindred

Our vision is that all children with complex needs in Scotland will live within happy and healthy family homes.

We will achieve our vision by:

- Providing specialist advocacy for parents
- Campaigning for improved services for families of children with complex needs
- Intrinsic to our ethos and service to parents is upholding and promoting the rights of all children as set out in the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This is underlined by our commitment to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 legislation. As such all our staff have undertaken the Scottish Government's Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) training.

Conversation with Sophie

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Kindred support families with lots of funding applications for digital technology to enhance their everyday lives such as iPads or adaptive technology. This includes specialist communicative technology, such as eye gaze etc. Kindred also help families apply for benefits such as the Child Disability Payment. Benefits services have moved mostly online, which makes it more difficult. Kindred help families by walking them through the process, which can be more difficult to do online. However, Kindred try to work with the family in their preferred communication method such as, over the phone, in person or by an online video call.

Kindred are also involved in supporting families through online training. They have rolled out the 'Early-Positive Approaches to Support (E-PAtS) learning online course. This is a course that was co-produced at the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent, specifically with and for families who have children with learning disabilities, to help enable them to better understand and support their everyday needs. The course is run online with a family carer and a health care professional. Accessing this course online is a cost effective way to provide quality support. It enables families to access support (peer support and professional support) without the need to travel, which makes it easier for them to attend.

Kindred utilise social media to help keep people informed and establish and maintain a sense of community".

Kindred have also worked with the Family Fund to help deliver online safety training.

We also help with form filling to submit to the Family Fund, and other organisations such as the John Watson's Trust, who award educational grants to socially disadvantaged children and young people with physical and learning disabilities.

Within the E-PAtS group we encourage people to connect via WhatsApp.

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support (or that could support) people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Young Scot have a [digital wellbeing](#) tool box to help you if you have experienced sexual violence or gender-based violence.

Digital safety is often all around parental control, but it's important to look at what you can do in your relationships with children to help them understand how to stay safe online. Learning disability nurses are useful to help aid understanding around specific issues. Something that I think is really importing is looking at how we can ensure that young people with digital technology are able to use it safely. How do we do that?

Learning how to have good conversations is important because you want to build up a relationship with your child so that if there are things of concerns that they will come to you for support."

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"One of the biggest barriers I think is that there is a lot of information out there but there isn't really good bespoke information that people can make good use of. I don't fully know what is available. It is overwhelming."

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"I know that some adult day centres are good at using digital technology. I've heard about activities such as using digital technology to create digital films, animations etc. Online does make it easier to connect and find services. "

Q. How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

"As mentioned earlier, COVID has meant we now do a lot more online- such as E-PAtS, which has given us a huge opportunity to work with the local [Child and Adolescent Mental Health \(CAMHS\) team](#). The course is specifically designed for learning disability and has been co-produced. This has had a great impact.

As a result of COVID we have become a much more digital organisation. We had a digital audit with the [Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisation \(SCVO\)](#) recently which was really helpful.

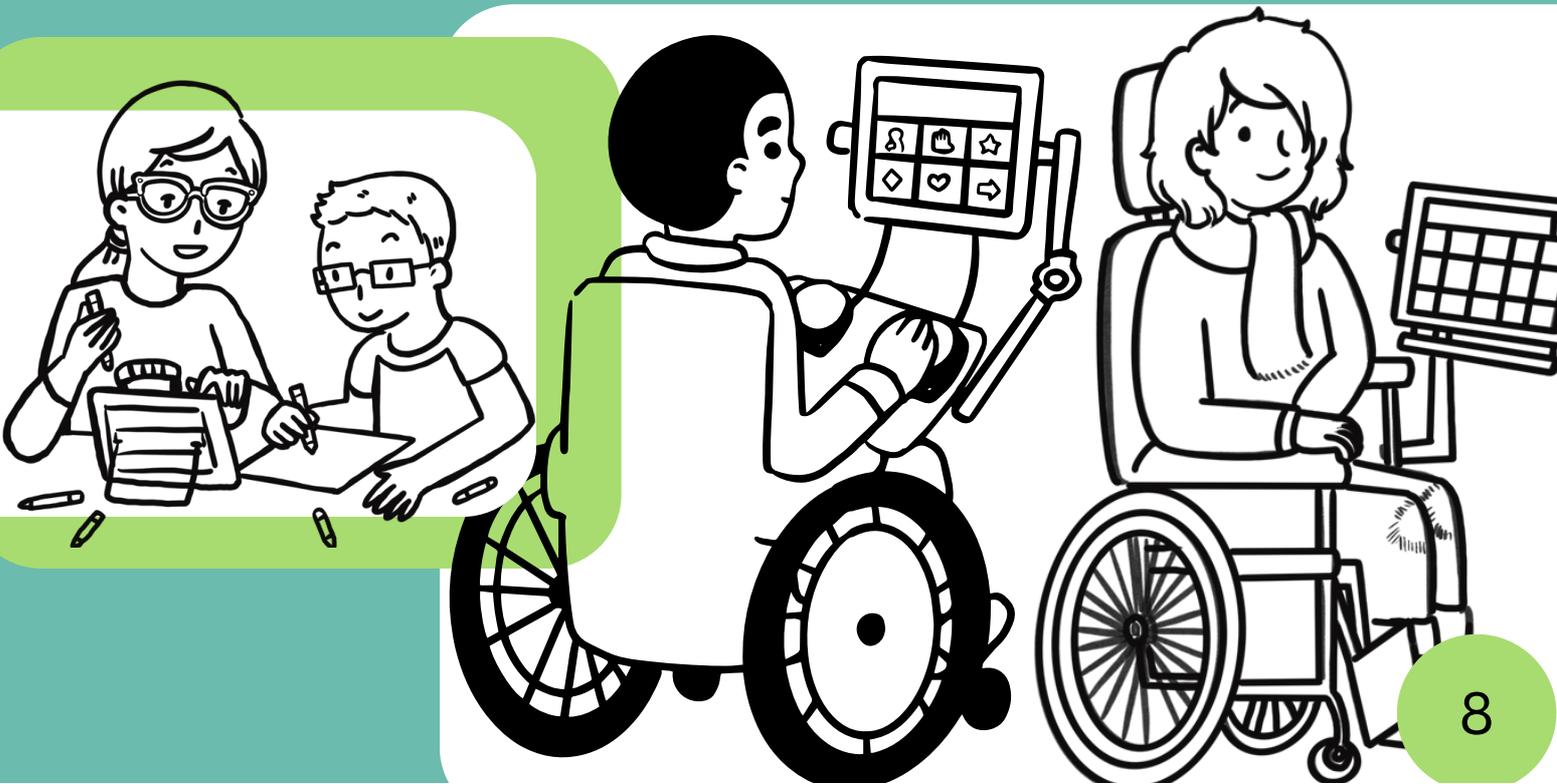
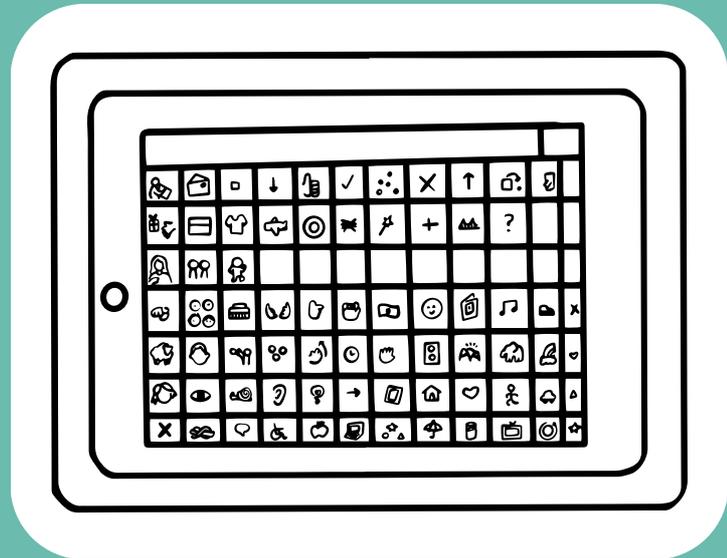
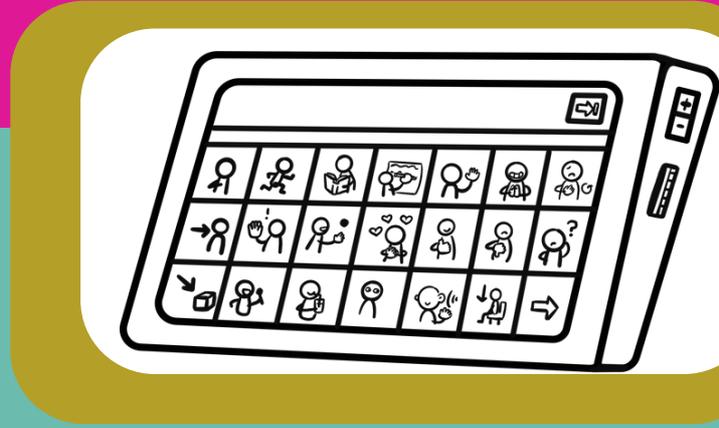
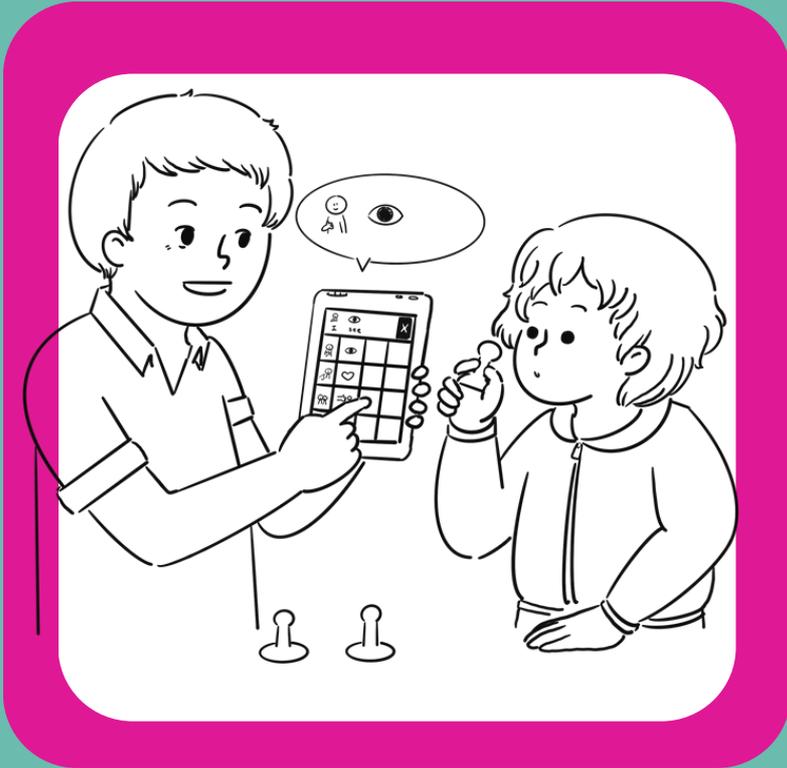
Working digitally means we can provide a fairer service to families and deliver more to families for the funding we get. Our service has become more consistent and more readily available."

Q. Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

"[CALL Scotland](#) are a good central resource for all things digital communication and offer a wide range of services.

In 2020, Macmillan Cancer Support worked with Community Interest Company [MyDex](#) to develop a new way to share data using a personal data store, called the [Digital Backpack](#)."

Capability Scotland



Highlights



Capability Scotland use digital technology to support everyday living from learning and playing to communication, and controlling your environment.



Using digital technology helps support learning.



Digital technology helps support a human rights based approach to care enabling people to have better autonomy over their life.



There is a need for more Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) awareness training workshops.



There needs to be more training to help support disabled people to use digital technology.



It is important that all documentation is in either Easy Read or symbolised/picture formats.



Training staff is essential for a consistent approach.



The technology used is a mixture of disability specialist equipment and universally available technology (that has often been adapted).



Using digital technology throughout COVID helped mitigate some of the social isolation and loneliness brought about due to the pandemic.



We filmed social stories and sent families links to useful resources during COVID.

Suzanne Green, Inclusive Communication Officer at Capability Scotland

About Capability Scotland

Capability Scotland delivers exemplary care, support, and education for disabled children and adults across Scotland. We were founded in 1946 and have always strived to be a major ally in supporting disabled people to have full equality of opportunity and participation as citizens of Scotland."

Our Vision

- An inclusive Scotland where everyone has the opportunity to have their voice heard, contribute to society and fulfil their potential.

Our Mission

- We will strive to deliver the highest quality services, tailored to the individual needs of disabled people.
- We will work in partnership to create innovative solutions which enable our people to achieve their goals.
- We will put our customers and learners at the heart of everything we do and will make sure their voices are heard loud and clear.

Conversation with Suzanne

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"We use a lot of digital technology at Capability Scotland. We use interactive technology ranging from mainstream to specialist equipment and apps. These include;

- Prowise touchscreens
- iPads
- A wide variety of high-tech communication aids to meet individual specific communication needs and access methods, such as eye gaze, switches and head pointers.
- Some of the technology is used for environmental controls such as to control blinds, enabling independence for day-to-day tasks
- Specialist switches are used to access equipment such as linking them to computers, sewing machines etc.
- Inclusive technology companies we use include
 - Smartbox
 - Inclusive Technology
 - Liberator

We hold quizzes using game-based learning platforms, such as Kahoot, which can be played on the smartboards and linked via iPad

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

- Project 52 deliver Sensory Story Boxes, made up of DVD's and resources, for settings working with children and adults with additional support needs, providing Intensive Interaction, Sensory Drama and Therapeutic Play
- Paragon deliver online music and dance workshops for people with additional support needs.
- Project Ability developed new ways of working to support their artists to stay connected with online workshops and exhibitions
- Indepen-dance provide a range of creative movement and dance classes online for disabled people

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"It is important that all documentation is in an accessible format such as easy read or symbols/pictures. We need to provide the right training for staff to support people with learning disabilities. And, we need to ensure there is a consistent approach from everyone supporting people with learning disabilities."

I would like to see more Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) awareness workshops."

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"Through the use of digital and assistive technology at Capability Scotland, we are enabling people to communicate and interact independently. We are giving people the chance to control the environment around them with a mixture of specialist equipment and universally available technology. We use a variety of switch, communication aids or apps to support this. Our interactive digital screens and personal computers make digital education accessible for everyone."

We have specialist sensory theatres and rooms that include the Sensory Guru Magic Carpets: this creates an inclusive play environment for people of all abilities."

Q. How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

"During COVID, we used video technology such as Zoom to engage with our customers and families. We helped to encourage people to engage with this, by dropping off iPads, laptops, switch accessible toys and utilising tech that was available to us."

Q. Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

"I feel Capability Scotland have some really good practice in this area. I think they offer a really high standard of access to digital technology. There is a real human rights approach to enabling people here. We tap into everything from using technology to enable play by using switch toys and inclusive technology, to learning apps such as clicker."

CALL Scotland provide a lot of fantastic resources and offer lots of courses around digital technology.

Talking Mats is a communication tool that uses a visual framework to support meaningful conversations. There is a fantastic digital version.

Boardmaker is specialist software that allows you to create communication boards, books and materials.

I would highly recommend courses with both Talking Mats and Boardmaker.

AAC Scotland provide online modules that have been developed to raise awareness of AAC and provide ways to support people with communication difficulties.

Additional Links

AssistiveWare

<https://www.assistiveware.com/>

Co:Writer | Write, Translate, Speak - Your Comprehensive Writing Assistant (donjohnston.com)-

<https://learningtools.donjohnston.com/product/cowriter/>

Home - Sensory Guru Ltd

<https://sensoryguru.com/>

Tobii Dynavox Global: Assistive technology for communication

<https://uk.tobiidynavox.com/pages/products>

Home - candleaac.com

<https://candleaac.com/>

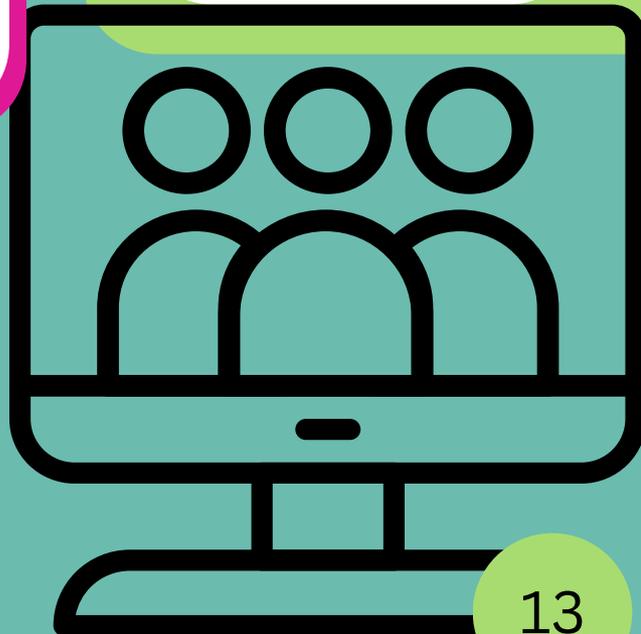
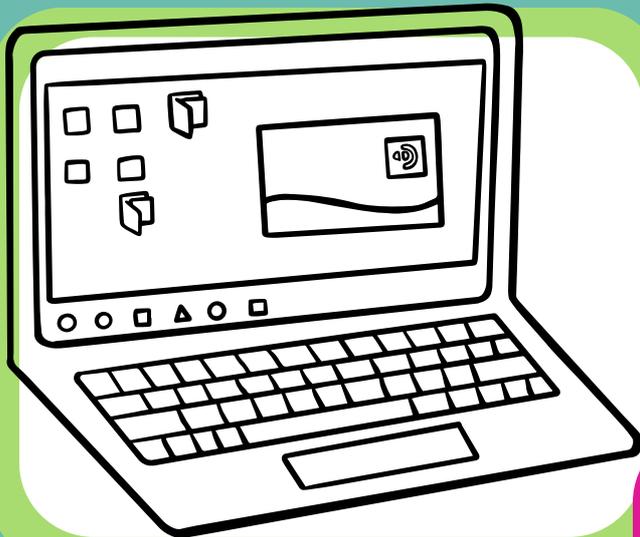
Clicker - Literacy Software | Crick Software

<https://www.cricksoft.com/uk/clicker>

Home - Communication Matters

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/>

Local Area Co-ordinator Link Life Fife, Fife HSCP



Highlights



Community link workers are able to support people into services by supporting them to overcome identified barriers.



The average reading age in the UK is 9 meaning that it is in everyone's best interest to have access to easy read and accessible documentation.



Interprofessional learning workshops are a great way for learning and working together.



Health literacy workshops are helpful for those working in services.



Using too many communication methods can confuse people



Phone communication is the most popular form of communication in our service followed by requests for in person support.



LAC staff don't have necessarily have specific digital skills training but are usually able to work out barriers and support people where necessary.



Community Link worker services are good because staff have a broad knowledge of local services.



Lack of confidence around digital technology can be a barrier for people accessing the services they need.



Staff don't ask specifically about digital technology but if it becomes apparent that this is an issue people can be supported in the areas required.

Louise Andre, Local Area Co-ordinator, Link Life Fife, Fife Health & Social Care Partnership

About Link Life Fife

"Link Life Fife recognises that many things can impact on mental health and general wellbeing. If you and your GP or nurse feel that you could benefit from support, they may offer you the opportunity to meet a local Link Workers. We support people to better understand individually what is causing personal stress and help people to respond most effectively through our Community Connector Project.

The Community Connector will listen and support you with any decision you make, help you identify areas that you feel ready to work on and offer practical support and guidance to make the necessary changes to improve your mental health and general wellbeing.

Anyone in Fife, age 18 or over, who is contacting their GP or other health professional for support to manage stress, anxiety or being overwhelmed affecting their mental health and general well-being. This is a free and confidential community-based service"

Conversation with Louise

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"We work with people in a person-centered way to overcome barriers and enable them to connect with their community. We provide 1:1 support to enable people to build their confidence and link into the community and to other organisations that can help meet specific needs.

"The average reading age in UK is 9 years old. So easy read documents are important. Our staff are trained to help people understand information and check that the people they support understand the information they are given.

"There are some good learning opportunities for staff to help support people in this area. Some learning available is at an inter-professional level, which is hugely beneficial as we all learn from each other this way. There is also a [lived experience team at Fife Voluntary Action](#). "

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"At Link Life Fife, we do not actively check that the people we support are ok in relation to digital technology and digital skills, but if it becomes obvious that there is a barrier then we help support them in what they need. When we do this we would refer to lots of different organisations working in this area, such as:

- [Ability Net](#)
- [LEAD Scotland](#)
- [Fife Carers Centre](#)
- [Fife Forum](#)
- [The Well](#)
- [Scottish Autism - One Stop Shop](#)
- [Seescape](#)

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"Using a mix of communication methods can be a barrier for people, and it is also tricky to manage. As a service we find not a lot of people use [NHS Near Me](#) as a communication option with us, and instead opt for other forms of communication. For our service, telephone support is the most popular, moving on to face-to-face when the individual's confidence builds.

Lack of confidence around digital technology can also be a big barrier for people, and so as a service we are able to help support people to build up their confidence, and, link in with other organisations if there are more long-term support required in this area such as to LEAD Scotland. Staff do not necessarily have specific digital skills training but are competent with technology and so generally able to walk people through what they need support with."

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"[The Fife Assessment Centre for Communication Technology \(FACCT\)](#) is a multi-agency team, staffed by a speech and language therapist, teacher, and technician, who work in partnership with parents, carers and professionals involved with an individual requiring AAC support. The team provides assessment and recommendation of appropriate communication systems. Support can be carried out at various locations including home, school, community settings and hospital. The team can also provide advice and training in a wide range of augmentative and alternative communication systems."

Link worker services are also good and have a broad knowledge. They have good knowledge of local service and know where to look to find resources.

Fife's [Community Learning and Development \(CLD\)](#) team often offer some opportunities to learn in various community centers.

There are also some drop-in services in Fife to access support, such as [The Well](#) and [Nourish Support Centre](#), where people can be supported to access services. This may be, for example, support to digitally apply for welfare support, a job etc."

Q. How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

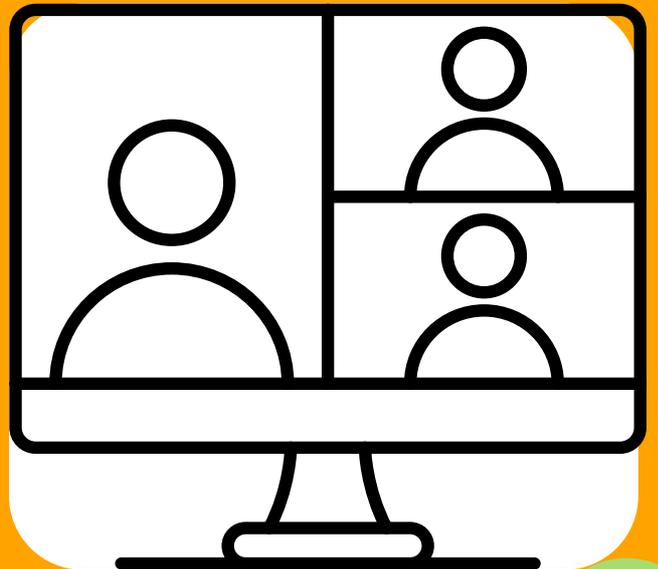
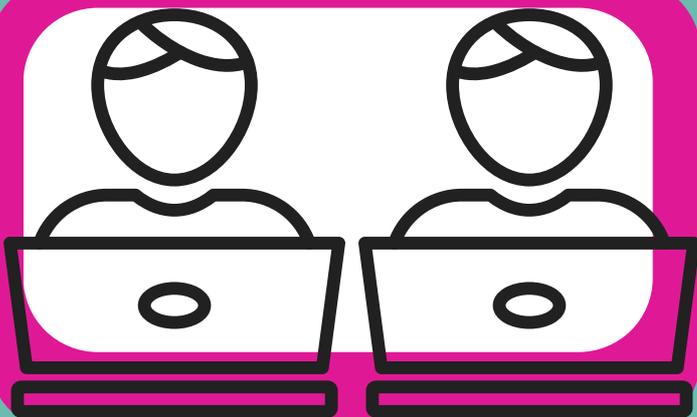
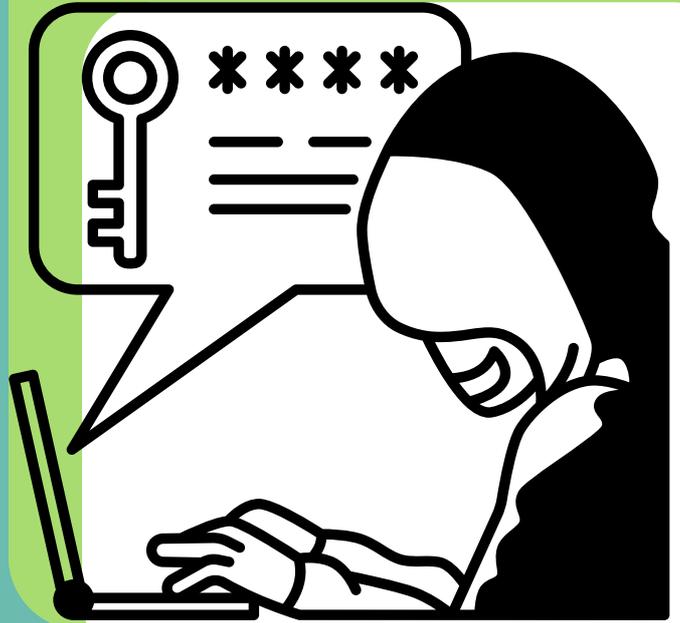
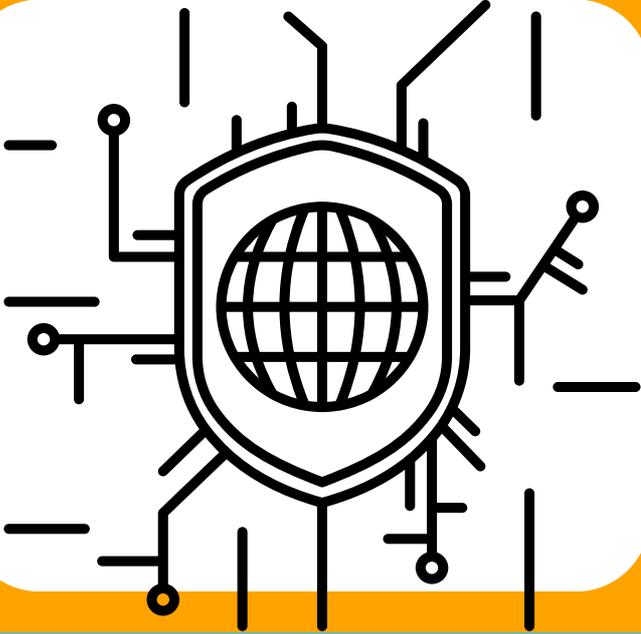
"This service started during COVID. It was all remote to begin with, and we used a lot of Near Me video calls. We are flexible and can offer people what they need in the way that they need it, within our remit.

Q. Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

"Link workers can do a warm transfer to support people along to services. This means they can support people to appointments and supporting them with the transition to new services. Good practice in supporting people is about enabling people and ensuring that they have the right support at the right time. It means utilising easy read guides and adopting good conversation strategies. "

[Connect Fife](#) is a partnership between Frontline Fife, Kingdom Support and Care, Trust in Fife, and YMCA Glenrothes. Operating currently in Glenrothes, Levenmouth and Kirkcaldy, the project is targeting a reduction in repeat homelessness through digital engagement."

LEAD Scotland



Highlights



Since COVID a lot of people have had to learn to use technology quickly.



Working online enables us to reach more people.



We have been focusing on supporting people by educating them about staying safe online and the importance of cybersecurity, cyber resilience and informing them of online harms.



We have developed an easy to access website with online training and digital skills resources.



Our Train the Trainer webinar is designed to help organisations support people in their community.



One of the biggest barriers to disabled people accessing technology is the risk. People have been stopped from using a device due to this.



We can support people to access digital technology, including obtaining their own device or through our lending programme



Through our learning projects we can offer 1:1 support to show people how to use digital technology.



Lived experience and shared stories are incredibly important when creating a learning pathway.



Disabled people are often not seen as the designers. I want to see disabled people at the helm in designing technology.

Emma Whitelock, CEO of LEAD Scotland

About LEAD Scotland

"LEAD Scotland is a charity supporting disabled people and carers, by providing personalized learning, befriending, advice and information services. We have projects across Scotland and a national helpline service. Our local services are community and home based, one-to-one or in small groups so that people have the right support to learn and participate. We support people with ambitions of personal development, learning, volunteering, and work. At a national level, we provide information and advice on the full range of post-school learning and training opportunities, as well as influencing and informing policy.

LEAD Scotland Vision: Our vision is of a fair society where disabled people and carers have an equal opportunity to learn, participate and achieve their potential.

LEAD Scotland Mission: To influence change and provide personalized learning, befriending, advice and information services."

Conversation with Emma

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Since COVID, a lot of people have had to learn to use technology quickly. As an organization we have looked at ways we can support people to use it safely. We have been focusing on supporting people by educating them about staying safe online and the importance of cybersecurity, cyber resilience and informing them of online harms such as phishing, romance scams etc. so that people don't fall for scams. We do this by developing easy read resources and running webinars to give people with learning disabilities the space to ask questions. Our Train the Trainer webinar is designed to help organisations support people in their community. Workshops can be delivered flexibly to suit an organisational need. Workshops can be small or large scale. They have mostly been delivered online, which has enabled us to have a wider reach, however they can be delivered in person if required. We have tried to make it easy to access different ways of learning. On our new website, the courses have been developed to give people the first experience of doing an online course. There is a certificate at the end of each course. Courses are about digital accessibility and staying safe and secure online. We have also tried to design workshops that are useful in this space by talking to people with learning disabilities about what they need.

More generally, we also recently co-produced an a guide called Accessing Community Based Adult Learning for Disabled People. This document covered people's rights and entitlements. Co-producers were paid for their time and involved in all aspects of this. The group worked together online. We did it this way so we could have a national spread of people from rural and urban areas with different academic levels and mixed abilities. Facilitating this online made this possible. Once developed, this guide was translated into various accessible formats including easy read, sign language and community languages. We regularly actively recruit disabled people and carers to help with the development of work and believe that disabled people and carers should be at the forefront of the design and delivery of services that affect them. Lived experience and shared stories are incredibly importing when creating a learning pathway.

In areas where we have funding, we offer 1:1 learning support through our learning coordinator service. We also lend out digital devices. This allows us to be flexible and respond to an individual's specific learning style. This support can be offered online, over the phone or in person. We also have a national helpline.

We are also able to support people to get their own digital technology. During COVID we were part of the Connecting Scotland scheme."

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"LEAD Scotland have worked with [Disability Equality Scotland](#) and the [National Cyber Security Centre UK](#), who are both good, trusted sources. Through our [Linking Cyber and Accessibility Project](#), we have been creating a bridge by translating the National Cyber Security Centre's messages into easy read, British sign language and community languages. It is incredibly important that people understand how to keep themselves safe online to mitigate the risk of online harm."

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"There are several barriers, such as not getting the right support to learn how to use devices safely and understanding how to mitigate the risks. Some people know they should have a long password for example, but they don't do this because it is hard to remember it. We try to help people overcome barriers like this. People have been stopped from using devices because others are worried about the risk. Social care workers need to understand the opportunities and risks of using digital technology and to help support people to maximise their potential. Social care and family members need support too. I would like social care staff to feel skilled and confident to support people. If staff don't have the skills and confidence, then the people they support miss out or are left open to a cyber attack if the device is not being used safely. That's a grey area in their job description I think, about whose responsibility it is to support safe usage. "

Another barrier is that disabled people are often seen only as the users of technology, and not seen as the designers. We need people with learning disabilities at the forefront of designing the technology. Technology industries currently are not diverse enough. We want to see more inclusion and more disabled people at the helm within the tech sector.

Motivation is another barrier. You don't know what you don't know. People can be afraid to learn about technology and not realise how it can help them. I think it is important to help people understand and learn how technology can make their lives better."

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"We have a range of local and national projects to support disabled people, including people with learning disabilities, local learning projects, online learning, befriending and helpline services. Our projects are all designed to meet the needs of individuals. We offer learning opportunities through our 1:1 learning where we show people what technology can do for them. Through this there are opportunities to help people get kit too"

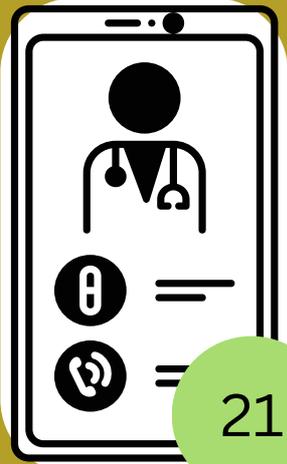
Q. How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

"COVID has meant we now work in a hybrid way. Working online more has meant that we have been able to extend some of our services to a national level. We have found that more and more people want hybrid options for accessing services, because it is a more flexible way to get involved."

Q. Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

"We have been reaching out to and engage with disabled people on a sessional basis to create more resources and courses in this area."

Mhor Collective



Highlights



A human rights approach to digital inclusion is essential.



Digital access is a human right because digital technology has formed a part of everyday life and is essential to access everyday things.



Digital data and ethics are important to know about and understand.



Technology enabled care helps enable people to better self manage their health.



There is a link between digital inequality and poorer health outcomes.



Technology enabled care helps enable people to stay well.



Poverty is a barrier to accessing technology.



Good access to digital technology can unlock incredible opportunities, and open doors to new possibilities.



Mhor Collective were a delivery partner for Connecting Scotland.



Operating online during COVID widened our capacity. It has enabled us to work with dispersed teams. We previously spent a lot of time travelling.

Shona Munro, Managing Director at Mhor Collective

About Mhor Collective

"Mhor Collective takes a human rights approach to digital inclusion. Digital is a fundamental necessity. It underpins every single aspect of our whole society. While it can unlock incredible opportunities, and open doors to new possibilities, lack of meaningful access to the internet, and to the necessary skills, can also make things worse for people, compounding other inequalities. Until full social equality is achieved, we don't think the problem of digital exclusion is going away any time soon."

Conversation with Shona

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Mhor Collective work with third sector organisations to help embed digital inclusion. This means supporting organisations to become more confident and to become digital champions. We do this by educating and upskilling staff and working in a holistic way. We take a learner perspective approach, meeting and engaging with people where they are.

To give you a real life example, in partnership with [NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde](#), we have been working with Health Improvement teams, looking specifically at how digital tools can support type 2 Diabetes self-management. We know there is a link between digital inequality and poorer health outcomes and so we are working increasingly in the space of health and technology enabled care to try and ensure that universal healthcare is really there for everyone. Mhor Collective worked alongside primary care staff to support digital skills and confidence. We also provide direct patient support, boosting essential digital skills which allow them to engage and utilize self-management tools and opportunities to manage their condition."

We were a delivery partner for the [Connecting Scotland](#) programme. Connecting Scotland was established during the COVID-19 pandemic, to address the unprecedented need to ensure people had access to devices and the digital skills to use them. The project provided a digital device, data/connectivity and digital champion training, which proved a successful model for digital skills engagement.

[Digital Champions](#) help people who get devices through Connecting Scotland to do things online such as connecting a device to the internet using the Wi-Fi settings, and putting in the password when they need to, sharing documents by attaching them to an email and understanding that not all online information and content that they see is reliable

"Digital data and ethics are also something that is important that people need to know about. "

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Two organisations I am aware of that are doing some great work are [Leuchie House](#) and [Neighbourhood Networks](#). "

Leuchie House is a respite service that has been at the forefront of health and care for 60 years. They recently developed a shortcut menu on the iPad to make smart room technologies accessible for those with no speech or dysarthric speech.

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"Communication is a barrier. The modes of communication being used are not consistent. For example, staff will send out a Microsoft Team's link instead of using Near Me."

Digital access is a human right because it has formed a part of everyday life and is essential to access everyday things. From the moment we get up in the morning, we access our phone for connection, make appointments, and access our shopping, ordering a meal in a restaurant to banking. Everything is referred back to digital.

"Things such as hospital discharge processes could be made easier using digital technology, such as reminders on people's phones. But this requires people to be confident with technology. Staff and supporters often think 'digital is not my problem...it's not my job!' But we cannot fix it alone.

We need to think about what a good digital standard of living looks like. At the moment, there is no equality of access. If we think about the sustainability of digital products. How long does it take, for instance, for a piece of tech to become outdated? If we think about smartphones as an example. Technology companies design devices that only last, say, three years. There is no equity of access to good technology. We end up giving digital devices that are refurbished and going out of date, to the most vulnerable in society, which puts them more at risk of online harm. Poverty is another a huge barrier to accessing technology. And then there is advanced technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). Only certain people are able to access this, and so the inequality gap becomes larger. "

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"Our website shows the people who we have worked with. There is a lot of digital technology around self-management for people who require support for a long-term condition. A lot of our work is around technology enabled care and helping to ensure that people have digital care skills in their everyday life."

Q. How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

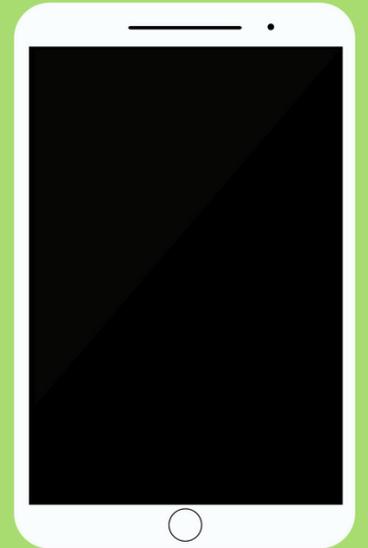
"Operating online during COVID widened our capacity. It has enabled us to work with dispersed teams. We previously spent a lot of time travelling. People are now more accepting of online training. We changed our model which means we now have more capacity. While some people still prefer face to face, working digitally has helped people retain employment. It also suits some neurodiverse team mates. COVID has accelerated it and made working digitally more widely acceptable. "

Q. Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

"[Estonia](#) is a fully digital nation, which is something I find interesting. They see it as a great thing. You can do most things digitally there, including getting married online!"

[Neighborhood Networks](#) have some good practice. Their projects support and enable people and encourage active citizenship."

Nourish Support Centre



Highlights



A lot of the parents we support don't have good knowledge, skills or confidence around digital technology.



Online groups are a source of invaluable support for our families. They help combat social isolation and loneliness by providing access to peer to peer support.



Poverty is one of the biggest barriers we see for families accessing digital technology.



We have accessed various grant schemes to help get families access to digital technology including laptops and ipads.



Families can request our food support service online. We have a closed Facebook group where people are able to share their skills and recipe ideas.



People often don't know what support is available, where to find it or how to access it.



We pride ourselves in good partnership working and work alongside many other agencies through our community hub who are able to support people with their digital needs.



We use digital technology to keep peoples data safe and secure.



During COVID we asked people what they wanted and responded to need. We gathered their views online.



During COVID we had more of a geographic spread to people accessing our services.

Lynne Scott, CEO of Nourish Support Centre.

About Nourish Support Centre

"Based in Kirkcaldy, Nourish Support Centre provides much needed and life-changing support to families in Fife who have additional support needs. Having a child with disabilities affects the whole family and not only causes worries and anxieties, but it also often causes loneliness, isolation, poor mental health, and poverty.

Our aims include:

Bringing families together – meeting with other families in a similar situation provides vital support, reduces feelings of isolation, and improves wellbeing.

Support for the whole family - Having a child with additional support needs usually means parents become carers, and siblings become young carers. We aim to support parents, carers, siblings, adults, and children with additional support needs. Extended family members also providing support, can also access our services.

Providing holistic support in a one stop shop – we know the different challenges facing families with additional support needs and we understand the importance of being able to access a wide range of emotional, practical, and financial support in one place.

Supporting people with additional support needs and their families by providing a wide range of services, adapting as we go to meet the needs of those in our community. "

Conversation with Lynne

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Nourish have a community hub where people can pop along to find out what services are available to them locally. Here we host a lot of events and work with a lot of other community organisations to help ensure people get the support they need. LEAD Scotland is one of the organizations that came along to our community hub. We advertise this across our social media and send it out in newsletters. LEAD Scotland helps with things such as supported learning and can also help with learning how to use technology and filling in online forms. A lot of the parents we support do not have good technological skills, knowledge, or confidence, so they find this support very useful. If they do not have access to their own, they can also access technology via Nourish or LEAD Scotland. We have supported families to get their own technology by linking in with various grant schemes.

Communication and connection are important to us at Nourish Support Centre. Feeling lonely and socially isolated is something that is widespread amongst the families we support. To help with this, we have online support chat rooms where families can connect with each other and with staff. More widely we also run the [Inclusive Fife Facebook page](#) which is a wider group open to the general public.

Online groups are a source of invaluable support for our families. They help combat social isolation and loneliness by providing access to peer-to-peer support. However, we have found that there are challenges that come with this which include not respecting the times, as well as and online abuse and slander. Our social media and groups are moderated to try and reduce online harms.

We accessed a scheme through Fife Council to get some of our families digital technology. We also applied for a grant to get iPads and Kindles to families.

Families also can request our food support service online. We have a closed Facebook group where people can share their skills and recipe ideas. "

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

- LEAD Scotland come to our [community hub](#)
- [Adult Basic Education \(ABE\)](#) offers free learning for young people and adults over the age of 16 in Fife, who want to develop their skills in reading, writing, numbers and digital technology
- [PAMIS Digital Passport](#) is a digital tool which allows people with profound and multiple learning disabilities to tell their own story, giving unique insight into their lives, experiences, needs and character, all of which help to build positive interaction and truly person led communication

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

- Financial barriers
- Learning to use technology
- People do not always know what is available
- Even though there is some general support to get tech there needs to be a lot more.
- People in poverty often need multiple things and so will have ruthlessly prioritize the things that they need with the resources they have, for example they would have to priorities a fridge over a laptop for instance.

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"All the schemes we talked about. Our staff are not trained in digital skills. We have staff who fear technology. It would be good to get them on some courses to increase their confidence.

We use secure digital technology systems to keep people's data private and secure."

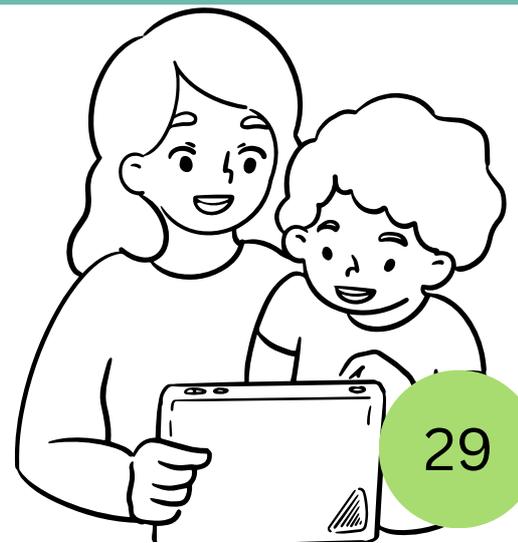
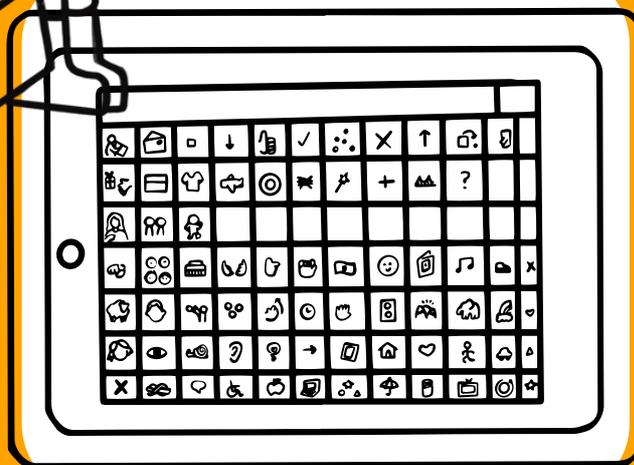
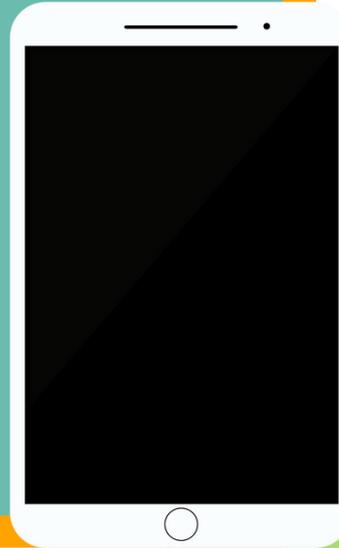
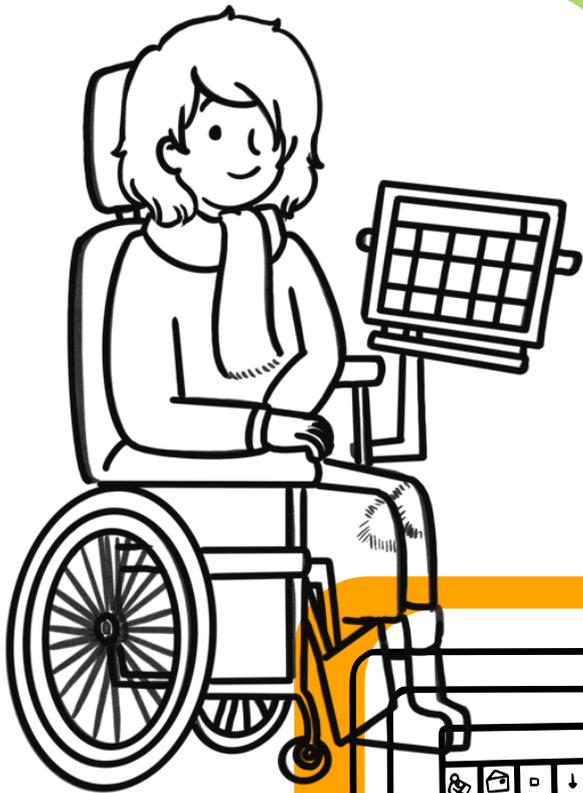
Q. How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/ deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

"Before COVID our services were largely in person. During COVID we had to find a way to keep connected. We did a lot involving young people such as creating online social events, quiz nights, kids dance as well as bingo and carer support. We asked people what they wanted and responded to need. We gathered views online. When we came back numbers were restricted. During COVID we had more of a geographic spread. We utilized the technology available to us, such as Zoom."

Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

"As mentioned earlier, LEAD Scotland and PAMIS.

FAACT and ASIST



Highlights



We provide the devices families require in line with Scottish legislation.



Our service supports Speech and Language Therapists and can be accessed by referrals through them.



The lack of support provided for the people who are supporting the children using the devices is a barrier to using digital technology.



Staff not being awarded the time off to take part in training is a barrier for people accessing technology.



In a few years AI might be able to synthesize people's own voice for AAC for people with MND and similar conditions.



Having a good team around you and good partnership working together is important.



Using devices such as iPads for the promotion of independence to access mainstream tech helpers such as Alexa.



We found that people seemed to get upskilled more quickly during COVID because they had time to focus on learning."



"Nothing about us without us". This phrase is up on our wall as a reminder to ensure a person centred approach.



We use Therapy Outcome Measures for AAC. This tool also measures the well being of the carer.

Cordelia Manson from the Supporting Learners' Service (FAACT and ASIST) Education and Children's Services

About the Supporting Learners' Service

FAACT (Fife Augmentative and Alternative Communication Team) Supporting Learners' Service provides advice and support for Education staff and pupils across Fife and encompasses a number of centrally based teams.

Conversation with Cordelia Manson

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Our organisation provides assessments for high tech communication systems. We provide the communication devices that families require, in line with Scottish legislation. The communication equipment and support legislation (part of the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care)(Scotland) Act 2016) places a duty on health boards to provide or secure the provision of communication equipment, and the support in using that equipment, to any person (children and adults) who has lost their voice or has difficulty speaking. Basically, the law says if you need AAC, then your local health board should look at providing support for you to access it. As an organisation we meet this legislative duty. The support model used across Scotland was developed in Fife. We are a one stop shop for this provision. Our funding comes directly from the Scottish Government to meet these duties. Our service supports Speech and Language Therapists and can be accessed by referrals through them."

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"Where a person doesn't have a communication difficulty, we would signpost to organizations such as MND Association, who can help set up devices with environmental controls for people to access things in their homes such as lights- blinds- tv etc.

"The teacher resources on CALL Scotland are really good. The Assistive Technology Support Service in Fife provides lots of support for teachers."

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"For us as an organisation working outside of the NHS, it is difficult to access Morse EPR, the NHS data sharing process, in Fife, which we need to access to receive vital patient information.

"Another barrier is the support provided for the people who are supporting the children using the devices. We find that it is often difficult to get pupil support assistants on to training because they are always with children, meaning that it can be very difficult to get a hold of them.

"Sometimes if people are not trained well then this can make using the device difficult. We hear stories of staff doing things like popping an iPad in a drawer because they don't have the knowledge or confidence on how to use it. We do support with training."

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"A lot of the stuff I'm interested in is around how we can use devices such as iPads for the promotion of independence to access mainstream tech helpers such as Alexa.

Services such as voice banking - creating a synthetic voice for a person who cannot use their own voice - are rapidly improving due to AI technology. AI might be able to synthesise people's voice for conditions such as MND with just small snippets of sound in the near future. This is groundbreaking and so important for people who have lost their voice through illness."

Voice banking is a process that allows a person to record a set list of phrases with their own voice. This recording is then used to create a personal synthetic voice. If you are no longer able to use their own voice clearly, you can use the synthetic voice in speech-generating communication devices to produce an infinite number of words and sentences. The voice created will be synthetic and not be a perfect replica of your natural speech, but it will bear some resemblance"

How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

"We have managed to work okay through COVID. We have had to do a lot via Microsoft Teams. People quite liked that. We found that people were upskilled more quickly because they have had to get on with it.

Having a good team around you working together is important. We need learning support teachers who are passionate, and parents who are tech savvy to help enable communication. It requires a real team of partnership working."

Q. Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

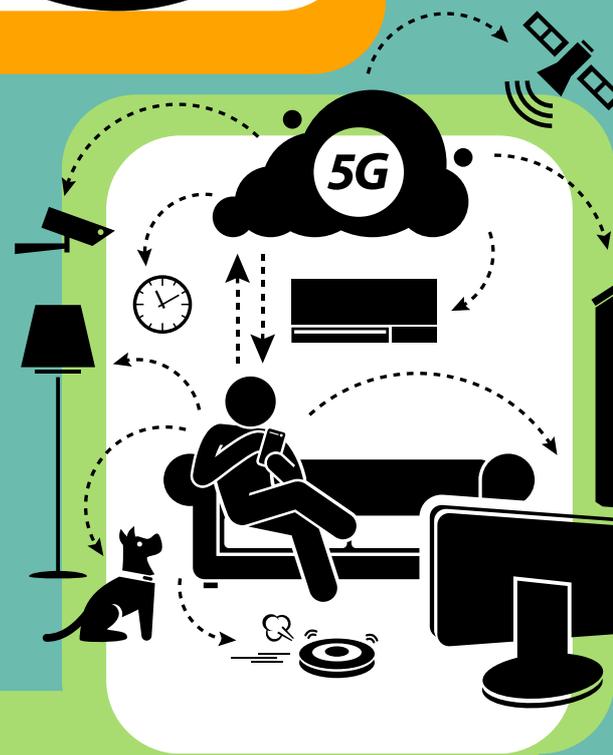
"The phrase Nothing about me without me in up on our wall." This phrase is so important. It is important to do things with people and not to them. It is important to work in a person-centered way.

"Corseford School, run by Capability Scotland is fantastic.
Communication Candle

"Communication and Learning Enterprises Ltd (Candle) is a not-for-profit organization that specialise in the education needs of AAC users

"We use Therapy Outcome Measures for AAC. This tool also measures the wellbeing of the carer."

Values into Action



Highlights



We have helped people access useful apps, including paying for these.



Local Authorities often offer training courses at local libraries.



QR Codes- not everyone knows how to use these and the point of access can vary from phone to phone.



Communication aids enable people to take part in the community.



It can be expensive to replace technology that gets broken.



Online communication enables more people with lived experience to get involved in issues that affect them.



We can't let the risk stop people from accessing technology. But for people with learning disabilities this happens and that's not fair.



We need to be thinking about barriers we come across and what are the solutions?



Parents and carers worry about the person they are supporting accessing inappropriate stuff by accident



Video editing means we can condense information which is helpful.

Donna-Marie Spier, Depute CEO at Values into Action Scotland

About Values into Action Scotland

"Values into Action is a charity supporting people with learning disabilities or autism. We believe in a Scotland where people with learning disabilities or autism have the same opportunities as everyone else and are supported to achieve these goals, whether to work, live where they want or to have a relationship."

Conversation with Donna-Marie

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"We don't have a direct project that relates specifically to digital technology. However, at the beginning of the pandemic we were able to get people connected with iPads laptops."

"The Assembly and the Life I Want group can be supported to access online and in person events. Hybrid and online really work for some people who feel much more comfortable accessing this from the comfort of their own home. Although, some people do still prefer face to face."

"We have helped people access useful apps. We will, for example in small groups, review apps, and then if it is good and worthwhile, we will then recommend it. We have in the past paid for the license of some of these apps."

Some of the apps we have looked at include:

- Hollie Guard: Hollie Guard is a personal alarm, deterrent, evidence-catcher and more. Providing a lot more functionality than a regular keyring alarm for absolutely anyone who has safety in mind.
- Hear Me Now: This app helps keep track of information that is important to you such as hospital appointments, photos texts audio etc. and links to information. You can then share your information with the people that are important to you. You're in complete control."

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

Some other organisations are doing a range of great bits of work to support people with learning disabilities in many ways;

- The Life I Want
- Fair Deal
- People First
- Neighborhood Networks
- PAMIS Digital Passport

Local Authorities often offer training courses at local libraries. There are little pockets of useful information, but often you must be in the right place at the right time to find out about the courses and events, or on the right mailing list. And, if you don't know what you don't know then how you will find it? "

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"Within our service we find some people pick up digital technology easily but for others it will always be a challenge. People are using their phones and tablets for everyday things, and they are missing out when they don't have the skills.

"The main issues I see are:

- Financial issues. Even if people can afford the phone, they often are not able to afford the upkeep of it such as data etc.
- Speech and communication difficulties. People's abilities affect their access to digital technology.
- The use of QR codes. Not everyone knows how to use things like this and how you access them can vary from phone to phone.
- People not have the skills or the opportunity to use digital technology.
- People worry about internet safety such as identity theft and fraud.
- Parents and carers worry about the person they are supporting accessing inappropriate stuff by accident.
- Being on social media can make people more vulnerable to online grooming, coercion and online bullying.
- Devices can be expensive to repair if you break them!

One of the other issues I see is technology - in particular through technology enabled care - taking away the human element. We have got to get the balance right.

Also, what happens when we give people this tool of tech and then someone has it taken away from them for whatever reason? What are we opening people up to if there is not the required wrap around support? Instead of risk assessment, at VIAS we talk about risk enablement. We cannot let risk stop people from accessing technology. But for people with learning disabilities this happens and that is not fair. Even the language we use around risk assessments. We must change the way things are framed to help us to move away from the medical model of disability to the social model of disability.

We need to be thinking about the barriers we come across and what are the solutions? What can we think about and prepare for in advance to enable people to have better access?"

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

- Tech Communication aids enable people to take part in the community.
- Online communication enables more people with lived experience to get involved in issues that affect them.

It would be nice to see more websites become more accessible and user friendly. There are [Accessibility Standards](#) but still often public sector websites and apps are inaccessible."

Q.How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on this issue?

"We have done things online in partnership such as hosting events like 'The Big Night In'. It would never have occurred to us to do it online before COVID. We also still do a fortnightly zoom session.

"We are a quality improvement service- for someone to come on a 2 hour workshop signing in from your home makes it much more manageable. Operationally having the hybrid model moving forward makes sense.

It helps connect people who are feeling isolated or unwell. It is a good tool to help people build up their confidence. It makes it accessible for them to participate. The more opportunities and options people have improves inclusivity. For example, if people miss an online workshop it can be recorded and they can request a recording to watch in their own time. Video editing can also mean we can condense information which is helpful."

Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

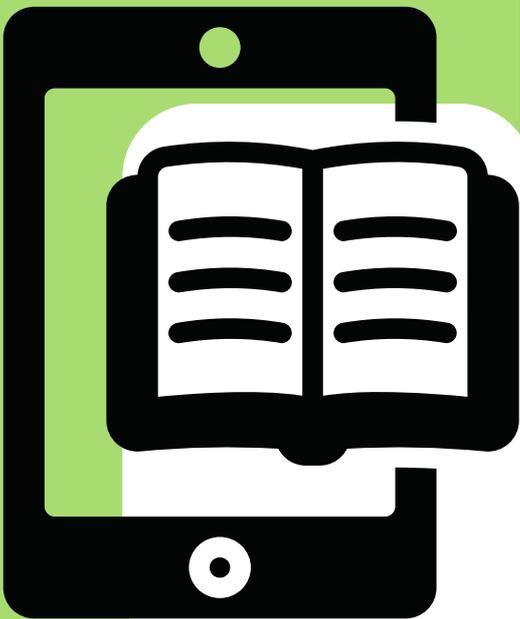
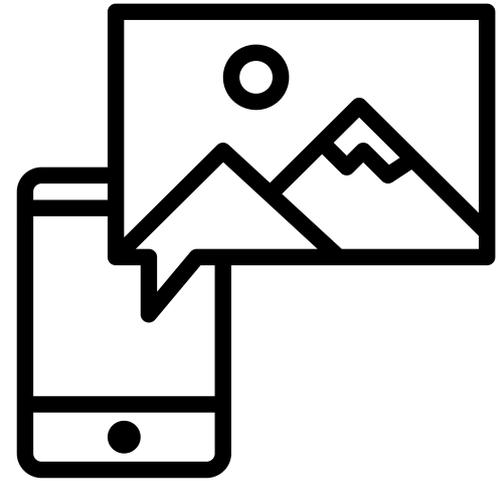
I Am Me Scotland's Keep Safe campaign is great. They have an app designed by and developed with disabled people. It enables the user to map out all Keep Safe places, plan routes in advance and find their nearest Keep Safe place. The app also enables people to report hate crime to the Police through the app.

There is a lot of great technology designed for people with dementia to help support people's independence and keep them safe. For example, the Canary app, which has a doorbell that rings and you can set 'safe times' that a person is leaving. You can also personally record a message so that the app can say things like 'dad it's not time to go to the shops yet.'

Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Scotland (RSHP) have some good online resources.

The Community Brokerage Award is an online course for anyone who works, or is interested in working, in a role that provides community brokerage to build the capacity of people who need support to live full lives in their community.

Neighbourhood Networks



Highlights



The pandemic highlighted digital poverty.



We have a tech fund where members can apply for the tech they require.



Easiphone is one of the best apps I've seen. It has helped a lot of people access digital technology.



Some people didn't grow up with technology and so have rejected it.



Some people had access to a smart phone but they did not know how to use it.



Easy read guides help support people to use their devices.



Jargon free language is important.



Technology stigmas are a barrier to people wanting to access technology.



The pandemic created a more flexible approach to working.



Cost cutting can often be put before accessibility which isn't right.

Andrew Burdge, Digital Co-ordinator at Neighbourhood Networks

About Neighbourhood Networks

"Since 2001 we have supported vulnerable adults many with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues to live an active, healthy life, safely, within their own homes and be fully involved within their local communities. Our members are active in our networks learning essential life skills, becoming more independent whilst spending more time with friends and becoming less reliant on paid support."

Conversation with Andrew

Q. What is your organisation doing for people with learning disabilities and their families to support or engage with the use of digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"The pandemic highlighted digital poverty. Neighbourhood Networks wanted to address this, and secured funding for my role to help combat the digital exclusion that many of our members were facing.

Two of the main issues we came across were that many of our members did not have devices and that some people had access to a smart phone, but they did not know how to use it.

We came up with a number of solutions:

- We created 'tech fund', where members can apply for small grants for a device from us.
- We have been showing people how technology can enhance their lives.
- Many people I have been working with have benefitted from using the easiphone company: these devices and app are designed to make using a phone easier. It has been designed for older people and people with learning disabilities to be able to access with ease with features such as big buttons and symbols.
- I learned about easy read and made a set of instructions and tailored easy read instructions for people's own make and model of their phones. I then supported them to learn by further adapting and tailoring learning to a person's individual learning style."

"It has been great to watch people find enjoyment with their new skills. One person I was supporting has been using their phone to take photographs. They were an older person who has gone 60 years without having a mobile phone and now they are enjoying doing lots of great stuff! "

Q. What are other community organisations doing to support people with learning disabilities and their families to engage with the use of digital technology, or to use digital technology to enhance their everyday lives?

"I'm quite new in post and focused on working with our members, so other than SCLD's Digital Transformation Project and the YMCA digital drop ins, I'm not really aware of many other projects and what they are doing to help support people in this area."

Q. What do you see as the biggest barriers for people with learning disabilities, in relation to using digital technology?

"There are many barriers

- One barrier is stigma. Some people didn't grow up with technology and so have rejected it.
- Accessibility is a huge barrier. Some tech is not actually that accessible so it is important to find the right technology or app and then tailoring it to a person's needs.
- The combination of someone having both physical and learning disabilities can be a barrier. It can take time to research and come up with the solutions to help enable them."

Q. What opportunities are you aware of for people with learning disabilities to utilise digital technology to make their lives better?

"Easiphone is brilliant. It is genuinely life changing. It offers some free software which does things like make the icons bigger. Computers and phones need to be accessible out the box and most of them aren't. "

Q. How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate/deliver services and has that shaped your thinking on these issues?

"I am new to this post, but I got told that before the pandemic everyone mostly worked from in the office 9-5. Now there is a more flexible approach to working. My role came off the back of COVID to help with this. The real positive impact is that there is more home and community working. The pandemic showed us things that were unnecessary, and highlighted the people who could not switch to digital without support. It highlighted digital poverty. The lasting effect of the pandemic is still happening. The way we interact with members changed. "

Q. Can you signpost to or highlight good practice in this area?

"Easiphone is the best bit of tech I've seen so far. Good practice is also having easy read guides to support people to access universal technology such as online banking and WhatsApp. It is important to be using jargon free language. Often I think cost cutting is put above accessibility which isn't right. "

Common Themes

Poverty and financial constraints are a barrier to accessing and maintaining technology.

There is often a lack of skill, knowledge and confidence from people supporting people with a learning disability.

Lack of digital skills and digital access contributes to health and care inequalities.

Specialist technology is expensive and can be difficult to obtain for those who need it.

People often don't know where or how to access the support they need and when they do find resources it can be overwhelming.

Some people are frightened of technology and worry that their lack of knowledge makes them vulnerable online and so they avoid it.

There is an appetite for simple online safety and cyber security training that is designed to support carers and people with learning disabilities.

Many people are finding hybrid approaches useful.

Working online means that organisations are able to reach more people making it a cost effective way of working.

COVID caused service to respond by moving their services online. This advanced their skills of working digitally.